

TEACHER'S CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

VOCAL MUSIC RESIDENCY



DOY GILT CARTER



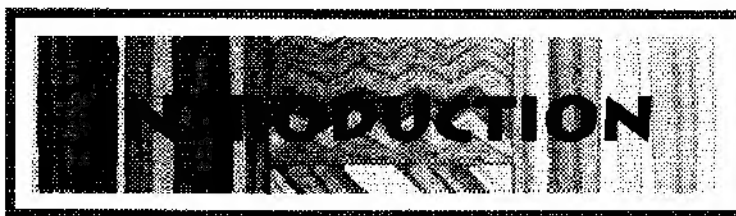
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Music is found in all cultures throughout the world and it plays a vital role in the life of many people. Today, most of the world's music is sung. As a natural progression, music and language form powerful relationships. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the vocal traditions of African American music. This guide is about the relationship between music and words in the songs of *Sweet Honey in the Rock*.

Sweet Honey in the Rock is a highly acclaimed, Grammy Award-winning, female a cappella singing group. The group's gospel-inflected, politically-laced repertoire consists of songs that come directly from the African American musical tradition, including chants, work songs, spirituals, blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel, and rap.

The music of *Sweet Honey in the Rock* represents a cultural and musical legacy that is both continuous and changing. The reservoir that the group draws from is huge. Not surprisingly, it is not possible to address in great detail all of the roads they will travel in any given concert or even within the residency sessions. Therefore, we ask you to select and concentrate on activities and musical materials that are covered in the residency training workshops or in this guide and that are germane to the interests and needs of your students. Your task can also be made easier by designing activities that allow students to demonstrate in some overt way what they have learned.

For example, we suggest that all pre- and post-residency activities, either those discussed in training workshops, suggested in this curriculum guide, or designed by teachers, be experiential. We think that an emphasis on the following will be helpful:

- Design activities that reinforce the students' understanding of the role that music plays in the life of African Americans.
- Provide opportunities for students to solve musical problems.
- Encourage activities that enhance students' ability to perform and create music collectively as a group.

The information provided in this curriculum guide is designed to help you, the teacher. However, the extent to which it is successful will depend on the diligence you and your school apply to preparations before the residency actually takes place. We want to help you. If at any time in the preparation phase, the ideas or concepts presented here are unclear to you, or you have other questions regarding the residency program, please feel free to contact us for clarification. You may call Linda Scaler-Socolof of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center Arts Education Department for assistance at (973) 642-8989, ext. 5830.

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THE PERFORMANCE/PRODUCTION

Their sounds vibrate. The pulse and syncopated rhythms of their voices touch the spirits and souls of their audiences. They are majestic in appearance and regal in manner. These six women, known as *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, appear on stage in beautiful, brightly colored, billowing African garb. Their props include chairs, two or three shakeres, rain-sticks, drums, cowbells, and a hand-held rattle. Their main instruments are their voices, which are the focal point of the a cappella performance.

The song selections for each concert are chosen by a member of the group who is designated as the concert programmer for that performance. As she approaches the microphone, the programmer thanks the audience for attending the show. She begins a narrative that sets the stage for the songs that will be sung during the concert. Prior to the performance, the other singers are not aware of the programmer's choices. They know, however, that the songs will be taken from the repertoire of music that *Sweet Honey in the Rock* has developed since its beginnings in 1973.

Even the programmer may not be certain of every song that will be included in a particular performance. Rather, she takes her cues from the mood and composition of the audience, combined with her feelings and those of the group.

The songs that the group performs come directly from the African American musical tradition. Their gospel-inflected repertoire includes spirituals, blues, work songs, jazz, and rap. Some of the songs address critical issues in today's society including homelessness, AIDS, abortion, freedom, justice, and equality.

As the women segue from one song to another, they do so with a poise and quiet dignity that is equal only to the "sweet honey" that emanates from their magnificent voices. Many of the songs are characterized by a call-and-response format, a frequently-found aspect of the African and African American musical traditions. Often, the group encourages audience participation, making the audience an integral and special part of this unique musical experience.



DWIGHT CARTER

THE ENSEMBLE AND THE ARTISTS

For 25 years, the women of *Sweet Honey in the Rock* have lifted their melodic voices in song to the delight of audiences throughout the world. The Grammy Award-winning, a cappella vocal ensemble is composed of six vibrant and talented African American women who appear on stage in African attire created by African American designers.

The group, which is named after the traditional African American song, was founded in 1973 by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, who originally imagined a mixed-gender group of perhaps a dozen members. However, only three women showed up for the first rehearsal, and although Dr. Reagon was disappointed by the small turn out, she was nonetheless very pleased with the sound that they produced. It should be noted that the members of *Sweet Honey* refer to the group as "she" or "her," making the ensemble a female entity. According to Dr. Reagon, "*Sweet Honey in the Rock* is a Black women's group because it was Black women who needed the music enough to show up the first time her sound came together. It just worked; it was very clear we had found her." Moreover, Reagon says that the group is a cappella because that is her most comfortable mode of expression. When people ask, "Where's your instrument?" she says, "It's right here in our bodies."

The year 1998 marked the 25th anniversary of *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. The joyously uplifting music that she has created over the years has placed these singing ambassadors in hundreds of communities across the nation, and in a number of countries around the world. Her international tours have delighted standing-room-only audiences in Brazil, Australia, Haiti, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Ecuador, Austria, Mexico, Uganda, and Japan. In addition, the ensemble has always been devoted to community at the grassroots level and therefore continues to perform in intimate settings such as churches, schools, and street festivals. This fact, undoubtedly, contributes to the closeness that many of her audiences feel with the group. According to the founder, connectedness and balance begin at home and Reagon refers to *Sweet Honey* as "the strongest community I've ever known."

We Who Believe in Freedom: Sweet Honey in the Rock—Still On The Journey, published by Anchor Books in 1993, documents the ensemble's formation and growth over two decades. The book, both a memoir and tribute, contains chapters by past and present members, as well as the extended community with commentary from Alice Walker, Angela Davis, and Sonia Sanchez.

The ensemble's celebration of its silver anniversary centers on a 12-month tour with performances at the Michigan Women's Festival, the Edmonton Folk Festival in Alberta, Canada, the AIDS Housing Conference, and the traditional Anniversary Concerts at New York's Carnegie Hall and the Warner Theater in Washington, DC, the group's hometown. During 1998, *Sweet Honey* added several special projects to her credits, including an appearance by several members in the film *Beloved*, based on the Toni Morrison novel. The group can also be heard on the soundtrack, produced by Bernice Johnson Reagon, of the documentary *Africans in America*, which was broadcast on PBS.

Sweet Honey is commemorating its 25 years of rich choral arrangements with the publication of a song book, *Continuum*, which includes full transcripts for choirs and ensembles and includes 20 of her songs. With a forward by Harry Belafonte and introduction by Horace Boyer, *Continuum* is a first for the ensemble, and one of several firsts for Ysaye Maria Barnwell who wrote the performance notes and also produced *...twenty-five...*, the group's 25th Anniversary recording.

Over the past 25 years, 22 women have passed through the ranks of *Sweet Honey*. As she moves into her second quarter century, she does so with the grace, style, and sweet melodic sounds that have made her presence known and felt around the world. That "special something" that the ensemble has created comes in large measure from the women that weave her magic.

While attending Northeastern University in Boston, she became a professional dancer and taught at Boston University, Roxbury Community College, and Joy of Movement Center. She was Artistic Director of the Art of Black Dance and Music, and Director of Young Afrique, a children's performance company in Lynn, MA.

Casel came to *Sweet Honey* after four years of studying, performing, and cultural organizing in Dakar, Senegal, where she was co-founder with Marie Guinier of ADEA (Artistes des Echanges Africaines). Dedicated to the exchange of ideas and services between Africans of the diaspora, ADEA worked with local artists, the National Council of Negro Women, the National Theatre Daniel Sorano, the University of Dakar, Air Afrique, radio and television stations, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the late Dr. Ewart Guinier of Harvard University. Casel has been a pioneer in making African expressive culture accessible in the United States.

Her compositions are featured in a children's textbook, *World of Music* (Silver, Burdett & Ginn, 1998) and were heard on the television pilot of *The Box*, produced by Robert DeNiro's Tribeca Production Company. She is the co-director of First World Productions, a cultural and educational performing arts organization. In 1998, Casel made her film debut in *Beloved*.

Aisha Khalil, also co-director of First World Productions, joined *Sweet Honey* in 1981. As an experienced singer of jazz and African songs and knowledgeable about dance performance traditions, she moved the ensemble onto new ground in its exploration of vocal improvisation. She is *Sweet Honey's* strongest blues singer, a genre that she had not explored before coming to the group. Some of the ensemble's most innovative work occurs in the performance of her compositions, including *Fulani Chant* and *Wodaabe Nights*.



In 1994, Khalil was named best soloist in contemporary a cappella music by the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America (CASA) for her performances of *See See Rider* and *Fulani Chant* on *Sweet Honey's* record *In This Land*. As a performing artist and master teacher in voice and dance, Khalil specializes in the integration of traditional and contemporary forms of music, dance, and theater. She made her film debut in *Beloved*. Her composition *Fulani Chant* has been licensed for the film *Down in The Delta*, directed by Maya Angelou.



A native of Philadelphia, **Carol Maillard** won a violin performance scholarship to Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. While pursuing a B.S. Degree, she was invited to join Robert Hooks's professional acting company, the DC Black Repertory. Simultaneously, Carol became a founding member of *Sweet Honey*.

Also a stage and film actress, Ms. Maillard starred on and off-Broadway and on tour in *Don't Get God Started*, *Home*, *Colored Peoples Time*, and *for colored girls who have considered suicide...* She co-produced *The Sho Nuff Variety Revues* for the Village Gate, which included stars Andre DeShields, Avon Long, Loretta Devine, Alaina Reed, and Gregory Hines.

Carol performed solo with Horace Silver on the Blue Note recording *Music of the Spheres* and with Betty Buckley on the recording *Betty Buckley: Live at Carnegie Hall*. She can be seen in the PBS production of *"for colored girls..."* and in the films *Hallelujah* and *Beloved*.



Shirley Childress Saxton, a professional sign language interpreter, learned American Sign Language from her deaf parents. She has 20 years experience providing sign interpreting services in a wide range of situations including employment, education, law, health, and performing arts. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Deaf Education and is a certified member of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. Ms. Saxton teaches sign language classes and conducts master workshops on sign interpreting music.

ELEMENTS OF A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

A *Sweet Honey in the Rock* concert contains a variety of elements that are characteristic of vocal concerts in general and African American vocal concerts in particular. Listed below are terms that will help students understand what they will participate in, see, and hear.

concert programmer - the member of the group who is responsible for deciding which songs will be sung at a given concert.

quintet - a group of five singers.

a cappella - without instrumental accompaniment.

improvisation - composing, reciting, playing, or singing extemporaneously.

shekere - a percussion instrument made from a dried, hollowed gourd strung with beads.

call-and-response - a form characteristic of African American music in which the person leading the song sings one segment and the audience or other singers respond with another segment.

griot - a storyteller in traditional African societies. He or she is responsible for remembering and retelling the history of a people, while passing on morals and values.

sign language interpreter - a person who uses sign language to communicate the message, feelings, rhythms, highs, and lows of what is being performed.



repertoire - the complete list of dramas, operas, dances, or musical works available for performance by an individual or a group at a given time.

syncopation - the placing of the rhythmic accent on other than the strong and expected beat.

pitch - the relative highness or lowness of a musical sound.

rhythm - the pattern produced by the relative stress and duration of notes.

melody - an organized succession of single musical tones arranged in a related and recognizable pattern.

harmony - the combination of several pitches played or sung together, often as chords.

texture - the combination of layers of musical activity in a piece.

form - the way a musical composition is structured in regard to repetition, variation, etc.

style - the distinct and unique manner in which elements of music are combined by a performer or performers.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

To understand the history and development of African American music, one must first gain an understanding of the history and culture of Africa, as well as how that culture transformed itself in America.

On the continent of Africa, there are thousands of ethnic groups, such as the Lesotho and the Zulu from Southern Africa, and the Yoruba, the Akan, the Peul, and the Ashanti from West Africa. The groups have similarities which serve as a foundation for traditional African culture. For example, all ethnic groups believe in a supreme being. They also share the concept of revering ancestors, those predecessors who have died and passed on to the spirit world. Music, song, and dance play an integral role in each society, documenting the history, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and values of the culture.

When Africans were enslaved and loaded on slave ships bound for America, often people from the same ethnic group were not boarded together. This was done so that they could not communicate verbally with one another and be able to plan an insurrection. However, the enslaved Africans found a way to communicate. On the ships, although they could not speak the same language, they began to communicate through rhythmic moaning and chanting. These chants and moans spoke directly to the issues they faced, their degradation, humiliation, and enslavement.

In traditional African societies, people engaged in singing during the work day because the rhythm in the songs expedited the rhythm in their work. In America, as they struggled to learn English, slaves moaned out their sorrows as field hollers while laboring in the cotton, rice, and tobacco fields of Southern plantations.

Many people in the North and the South were opposed to slavery. These abolitionists objected to the treatment of the enslaved, calling it inhumane, ungodly, and morally wrong. When the slave owners realized that public support for the abolitionists was growing, they began to give the enslaved African Americans religious instruction. The slave owners believed that this would demonstrate that they were not as inhuman as people thought.

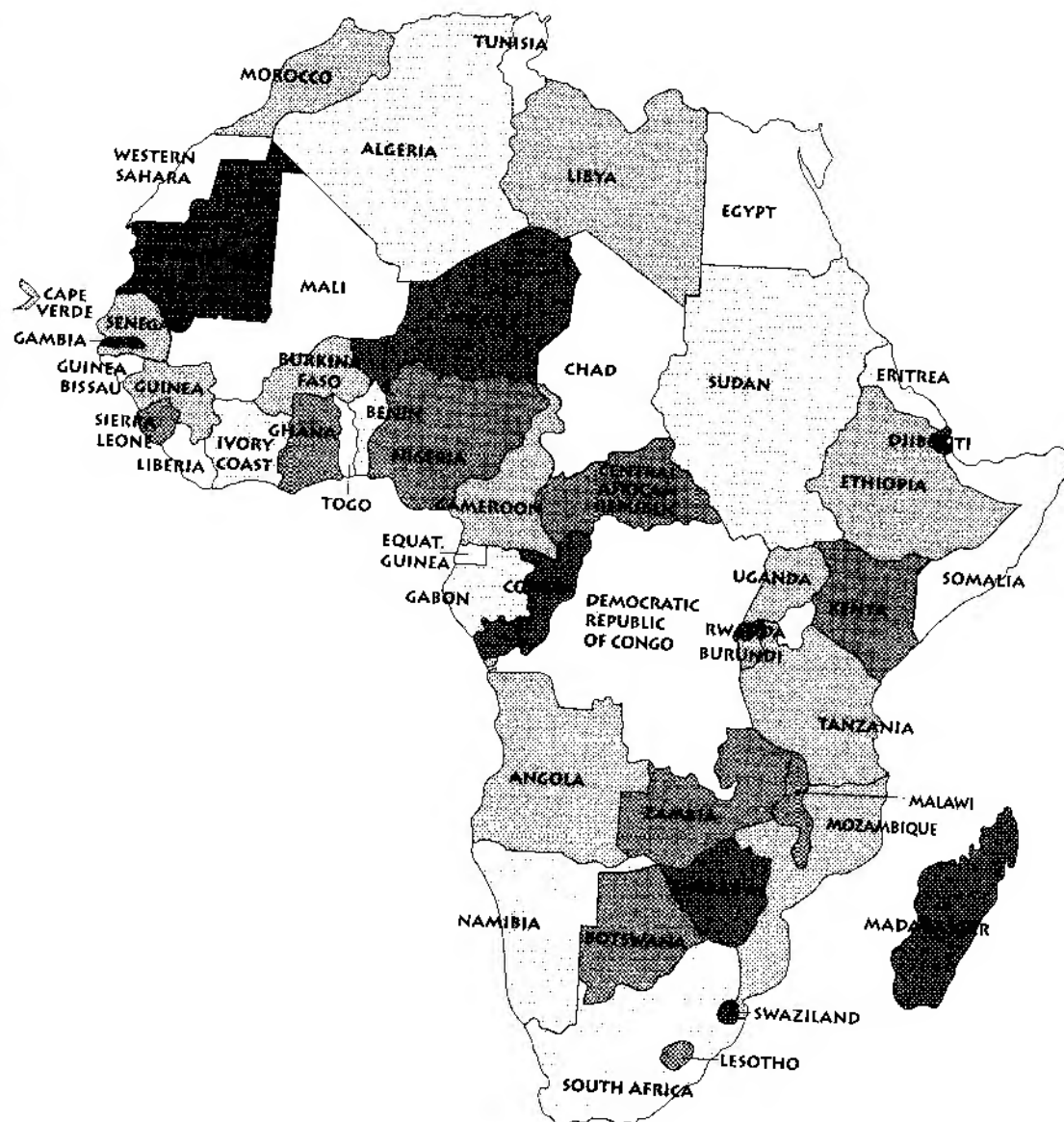
These new religious teachings blended with indigenous African musical expression and gave rise to the spiritual. Many of these songs spoke of going to heaven as a means of gaining freedom from earthly woes. Some of the songs even had an encoded message that was understood only by its singers, for example *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. The words "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home" signaled that the underground railroad, a secret system that helped enslaved run-aways to reach freedom, was coming through town.

During the 1800s, in Congo Square in New Orleans, another transformation of African American music took place. Every Sunday, the enslaved African Americans were allowed to come together, play their drums, and dance. Until 1803, Louisiana was under the jurisdiction of France. Because of this European influence, African Americans were exposed to French marching bands that used a variety of instruments. The African American musicians began to appropriate the syncopated rhythms of the European music and combine it with their own, and this resulted in jazz.

In the late 1800s, after the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished, African Americans migrated to the North, as well as to other parts of the South. They were now able to have experiences that they had not had before. They were able to marry, work for wages, and establish business enterprises. With this new freedom, they had other topics to sing about: love, low wages, and long work hours. These songs became classified as the blues.

By the late 1930s, large rhythm bands accompanied blues singers, primarily in Northern cities. Their music combined the blues and jazz, and was characterized by a strong, simple rhythm. This pairing led to the development of rhythm and blues (R&B), which was later popularized through records and the radio. Although gospel music began to emerge in the 1920s, it evolved in the 1960s as contemporary singers of sacred music incorporated the improvisational styles of jazz, the sultry sounds of the blues, and the rhythmic qualities of R&B into their singing. The protest songs of the Civil Rights Movement were frequently based on spirituals, often with new and relevant lyrics.

In the early 1970s in the Bronx, NY, hip hop culture and rap music evolved from young, African American male disc jockeys (DJs). Working with two turn tables, the disc jockeys would spin different albums on each table to mix the music and create a new rhythm and beat, ultimately altering the sound of the music. Periodically, the DJs scratched the needle across the albums to create another sound effect within the music.



Rap music developed further in the late 1970s in New York. It was chiefly characterized by the singer using his or her voice to mimic various percussion sounds. Rap songs deal with the issues that plague today's society and this music has been criticized for its negative content. Many of the young people singing these negative lyrics suffer from the erosion of values which is unfortunately a part of contemporary society. However, many of the lyrics are positive, urging young people to educate themselves, give back to the community, take pride in their history and culture, as well as to respect themselves and others. Whether lyrics are perceived as positive or negative, young people are documenting their thoughts, feelings, opinions, values (or the lack thereof) and morals through song. This is similar to what their ancestors did long ago in Africa, on board the slave ships, in the Southern cotton fields, and as they experienced their new found freedom after enslavement.

The music of *Sweet Honey* encompasses the various forms and styles of music that are characteristic of the African American musical tradition. The following chart briefly traces the development of this tradition.

1619-1840

chants - recitations containing religious themes which asked for blessings or sought to appease the spirits and deities. The chants were expressed on board slave ships.

1619-1865

field hollers - melodic moaning and humming by enslaved Africans on the plantations, prior to their learning the English language.

MID 1600S-MID-1800S

work songs - songs sung on plantations by enslaved Africans as they labored.

1700S-LATE 1800S

spirituals - songs created and sung by enslaved Africans on the plantations after they learned English and were given religious instruction.

LATE 1800S

blues - a style of music, usually with a slow tempo, that evolved from Southern, African American secular songs. The blues were sung after the Civil War by newly freed African Americans, expressing their bitter experiences with slavery, discrimination, and poverty.

jazz - a type of American music marked by a strong, but flexible, syncopated rhythm with solo and ensemble improvisations. It first developed in New Orleans.

1920S

gospel - urban sacred music that encompasses the musical styles of spirituals, blues, and jazz.

LATE 1930S

rhythm and blues (R&B) - music that combines blues and jazz. It is characterized by a strong, simple rhythm and is sung by blues singers backed by large rhythm bands.

1970S

hip hop - music created by mixing two songs played simultaneously by a disc jockey.

rap - a highly rhythmic musical form, characterized by rhyming lyrics, percussive mouth sounds, and themes that address a variety of societal issues.

GLOSSARY

The following are terms which may help students understand some of the historical, social, and political influences on African American music.

abolitionism - the belief that slavery should be eliminated. Abolitionist movements were influential between the American Revolution and the Civil War.

abolitionist - an activist who worked to end slavery.

civil rights - the right to personal liberty as established by the constitution of the United States.

Civil Rights Movement - a drive to end segregation and attain full personal and political freedom for African Americans. The effort began in 1954 with the United States Supreme Court decision on school desegregation, *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The drive was spearheaded primarily by African Americans in the Southern States with support from organizations and people representing all ethnic backgrounds, sections of the country, and occupations.

Civil War - the war between the Northern and Southern States that occurred from 1861-1865.

culture - the beliefs, customs, arts, and institutions of a society.

Middle Passage - the transatlantic trip that enslaved Africans endured as they were brought from Africa to the United States.

plantations - large farms in the Southern United States where enslaved African Americans were held in bondage.



Student Nonviolent Coordinating

Committee (SNCC) - a student organization during the Civil Rights Movement that organized sit-ins and other activities for students in support of civil rights.

tradition - a custom, belief, or value passed down within a family, organization, etc. from one generation or group to the next.



BEFORE THE CONCERT

ACTIVITIES RELATING TO SWEET HONEY'S MUSIC

1. Ask your students to name some differences between a cappella singing and songs accompanied by musical instruments. Have them consider how the a cappella singers utilize their vocal instruments. What kinds of instruments can a cappella singers mimic with their voices?

2. Have your students use their own voices to mimic the sounds of instruments (e.g., bass guitar, harmonica, saxophone, drum). What differences do they hear in the sounds from their voices?

3. Music is not only heard, but is also felt. Ask your class what kinds of feelings the following songs or types of music evoke: love song, nursery rhyme, *The Star Spangled Banner*, hip hop, upbeat spiritual, classical music.

4. A cappella or unaccompanied music can be used in various situations and for varied functions. Have students list times when a cappella music might be appropriate (e.g., lullaby, caroling, demonstrating parity of vocal quality). Have students list where they have heard a cappella music (e.g., in church, in the theater, on TV commercials, such as the singing group Rockapella performing in the Folger's Coffee advertisement).

5. Have students create a group a cappella polyrhythm and melody. Divide students into groups of five or six. Have one person create a short vocal rhythm or pulse and keep it up as each member of the group joins in by adding another short rhythm. Ultimately, the combining of all the rhythms creates a melody. Each member of the group should be free to change his or her rhythm but must realize how this impacts the whole musical environment and changes the relationship between participants. Not only does this whole activity reflect what occurs when *Sweet Honey in the Rock* performs, it also mirrors other aspects of African American life. For example, during the Civil Rights Movement, many people participated in the effort by taking on different roles and responsibilities but contributing to the overall drive for human rights.

6. Music is as much about people—what they believe, where they come from, and where they are going—as it is about sound. It speaks to such social concepts as culture, society, class, and ritual. The following chart suggests ways to listen to and analyze the musical, social, and functional aspects of *Sweet Honey in the Rock's* music. It may also be useful in discussing African American vocal music in its cultural context with students. (Also see "A Brief History of African American Music," pg. 7.)

PLACE OF ORIGIN	TIME PERIOD	FORM/STYLE	PERFORMANCE STYLE
Africa	Traditional	Ceremonial	Accompanied (drums)
United States (South)	Slavery	Play games, work songs, spirituals	Unaccompanied
United States (South)	Reconstruction	Arranged spiritual	Unaccompanied
United States (North West)	Migration	Quartet, blues, jazz, gospel	(Un)accompanied
United States (South)	Civil Rights	All of the above	(Un)accompanied
United States (North/West)	Nationalism	R&B, pop	(Un)accompanied
United States (Urban)	Post 1970s	Reggae, rap, world rhythms	(Un)accompanied

DISCUSSING THEMES FROM SWEET HONEY'S MUSIC

1. *Sweet Honey's* repertoire covers a range of topics: women's issues, freedom, justice and equality, AIDS, homelessness, and abortion. Ask students why they think it is necessary to talk about these issues. Are the issues less threatening when highlighted in a song?

FREEDOM

2. What do students think it would feel like to be homeless? How would it feel to be diagnosed as HIV positive? What problems would a homeless person or a person diagnosed as HIV positive experience?

EQUALITY

3. "We who believe in freedom will not rest until it comes" is a line from *We Who Believe In Freedom*, a song from *Sweet Honey in the Rock's* repertoire. What does freedom mean to your class? Can they name any group of people who have struggled for freedom in the United States? Can they name any group of people who have been oppressed in the rest of the world? What do students know about these people in the United States or in other parts of the world?

JUSTICE

AIDS

4. In the song *Juba*, a person is mistreated and must confront the situation. What do your students do when they do not like the way a person treats them? How would they handle the situation, if it is a teacher, friend, stranger?

HOMELESSNESS

5. Social, religious, or political forces, as well as rituals, economics, and social commentary may be reflected in *Sweet Honey's* songs. Have students listen to and analyze the following songs to identify the influences on the pieces: *Somaguazara* (rite of passage ritual), *Young and Positive* (social commentary). Can they identify similar influences in other *Sweet Honey* songs that they are learning?

ABORTION

AFTER THE CONCERT

TALKING ABOUT THE CONCERT

1. Ask students to identify the types of songs and singing styles in the *Sweet Honey* concert. How did students respond to the various songs? What characteristics of the music created this response? What specific issues did the songs address? What specific things did the students notice about the presentational style or production elements, such as lighting, sound, scenery, or props? How does this concert compare with other concerts students have seen?

2. Have your students discuss how the concert programmer set the stage for the songs that were sung.

3. Ask your students to describe the type of attire worn by the singers. Do they know the kind of fabric used to create the women's outfits? Do they know where the fabric came from and how it was made?

4. The members of *Sweet Honey* sometimes use accompanying instruments, e.g., shakers, rain sticks. Have your students research these instruments, their origins, and how they are made.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

1. Have each student write an essay about his or her reactions to the concert and to performing in it.

2. Divide students into groups and have each group write a rap song about increasing peace in the community or the world or other topics of interest, which are similar to those addressed by *Sweet Honey*.

3. Assign the class to read the poem *Mother to Son* by Langston Hughes. Ask them to identify the poem's message. Have each student write a poem that includes an important message that he or she would like to share with other young people.

4. Ask your students to interview a relative who was born in the United States prior to 1954. Have them find out where the person was living during the 1960s and 1970s. What issues were critical at the time? Did any of the songs the person listened to deal with these issues. How did he or she feel about the manner in which the issues were presented in the music? Have each student write a report on his or her findings.

5. In concerts given by *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, the concert programmer is equivalent in many ways to the griot or storyteller in traditional African societies. Ask students to talk with their parents and grandparents to find out what kinds of stories are a part of their family history. How are these stories passed from one generation to the next? Have the stories changed over the years? Do the stories pass on morals and values that the family holds dear? Why are the stories meaningful to the family? Do family members plan to pass them on to their children? Ask the students to write out these stories and share them with the class.

6. Have students be concert programmers for their vocal group. What songs would be part of their concert? Have them list one song for each of the following categories and state the reasons for their choices: spiritual, gospel, classical, rhythm and blues, rap, hard rock, country and western, jazz, holiday song, and anthem.

7. Have your students read a biography of Thomas A. Dorsey or Mahalia Jackson. Ask them to listen to some of his or her songs. What characterizes his or her music? On what kinds of themes does the music focus? What kinds of messages are contained in the songs?

8. Ask the students to research tie-dyed, kente, and mud cloth, three fabrics manufactured in Africa. Which countries in Africa do they come from? How are they manufactured? What is the history behind the fabric? What symbols or messages are woven or imprinted in the cloth? Have the students create textile designs, including any symbols or messages that are important to them.

9. Plan an International Festival. In addition to reprising songs the students learned during the residency, let each student bring in songs from his or her culture, including any background information on the music. Ask students to share foods and stories from their cultures.

10. Have the class make a video, five minutes in length, of events in and around the school. Create, perform, and tape a soundtrack in the style of *Sweet Honey in the Rock* for the video.

11. Identify and list a cappella groups that are popular today. How would your students classify the music of each group? Do any of the groups represent specific ethnic, cultural, or musical traditions? Compare and contrast their songs and singing style with *Sweet Honey's*.

12. Listen to examples of African American vocal groups who performed in the 1920s and 1930s and analyze their specific characteristics in terms of rhythm, melody, harmony, and style.

13. Have students listen to some a cappella groups who performed from the 1940s to the 1960s. List the topics referred to in their songs. Have students research current events of the era. What connections are there between the current events and the topics or subjects of the songs?

DISCUSSING THEMES FROM THE CONCERT

1. Do your students think that *Sweet Honey's* songs have a message? Have students identify the message in various songs. If the students had to compose a song about an issue plaguing society today, what would their message be? Why? What would be the title of the song?

2. Ask students what historical circumstances played a role in the development of the music that *Sweet Honey in the Rock* sing and talk about?

3. What musical styles played a role in the development of *Sweet Honey in the Rock's* tradition?

4. How do your students think musical traditions are passed from one generation to another? How do musical styles change from one generation to another and why?

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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Blvd.
New York, NY 10037



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